



Department Updates

April 2020

Courts Remain Open During COVID-19

Sharon Millermon
Clerk of Circuit Court

Like all departments, the normal workday or work week basically does not exist at this time and major adjustments have been made through the COVID-19 pandemic. Having said that, the Justice Center remains open, including the Circuit Courts, Clerk of Circuit Courts and Register in Probate. Litigants, defendants and filers are still coming in person daily to conduct business.

Presiding Judge Babler has issued a second emergency order to coincide with Wisconsin Supreme Court's most recent Order of March 22, 2020 and also addresses additional safety measures for the public and staff summarized as follows:

1. All in-person proceedings are suspended through April 30, 2020 except those cases exempted. Most court proceedings are being conducted by video conferencing, telephone or zoom. Court clerks are still required to clerk all hearings.
2. Litigants are encouraged to appear by other means than in person; however, if a party wants to appear in person for example for a restraining order hearing, it is allowed. For parties appearing in person for exempted cases, the court and court security officer make sure the parties are adhering to social distancing and will take steps to limit the number of persons in the courtroom at one time.
3. Jury trials will not be held until after May 22, 2020 or until further order of the court.
4. The Clerk of Circuit Court and Register in Probate may require any in-person filing to be made by fax using a fax machine provided by the Clerk, at no cost to the filer. This is a new addition and is used to lessen the amount of paper being handled from one individual to another. Unfortunately, the courts and staff cannot avoid handling all paper.
5. All traffic and forfeiture cases shall have return dates of June 1, 2020 or later.

Court staff, including judges, are being rotated as to who is in their respective office and who is working remotely. Social distancing and staying at home is not taken lightly.

To name a couple other procedural changes/orders:

1. Governor Ever's Emergency Order #15 has placed restrictions on eviction and foreclosure actions until May 27, 2020;
2. Wisconsin Supreme Court Order of April 13, 2020, relates to filings by mail to address the number of people physically present within the courts of this state; and
3. Remote notarization of documents is being allowed.

As we are all staying at home and odds are watching more TV, we have all heard, "we will get through this together" and we will.

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Circuit Court**

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Highway Department

Mark Servi Highway Commissioner

Work performed by the Highway Department was determined to be an Essential Service. Our operations have been fairly consistent with previous springs, but we have altered activities and procedures to meet social distancing practices. As always our goal is to provide for safe travel on good roads.

With less traffic on the road due to the Shelter-at-Home order, we are taking the opportunity to do some maintenance activities, such as crack filling and spray patching, in areas where there would normally be higher traffic. This makes for a safer work zone for our crew as well as the traveling public. Otherwise, our crews are performing the typical tasks we would be doing at this time of year in preparation for our construction season as well as maintenance activities such as pothole patching and shoulder maintenance.

We are scheduled to perform the following paving projects with our crew on the county system in 2020:

CTH SS – Chetek to CTH AA. The weather shut our operations down before we were able to complete this paving in the fall of 2019.

CTH OO – CTH SS to CTH O. This is a complete pavement replacement project.

CTH I – This project is the last section of CTH I coming into Chetek from the west. It is ¼ mile long and will be done in conjunction with the CTH OO project, as we have to mobilize milling and pulverizing equipment from outside the county for both projects.

Additionally, we have projects that being constructed this year that will not be performed by our crews, primarily because the funding streams require that the projects be let to contract:

Bridge Deck Overlays – this work consists of repairing the bridge decks and placing a new concrete wearing surface. Funding was obtained through the County Highway Improvement Discretionary Program. The locations of these five project are: CTH M over Pokegama Creek, CTH M over German Creek, CTH O over the Yellow River, CTH A over the Red Cedar River and CTH AA over Pine Creek. We anticipate bidding these projects in May, and construction to take place over the summer.

CTH U / Village of Dallas – the Department applied for funding under the Multi-Modal Local System (MLS) funding program, a one-time program created in the 2021-22 budget. There were 105 county project applications submitted and 32 were awarded. We will be receiving State funding for 70% of the costs of this project. The project is reconstruction of CTH U from CTH A north to the Village limits, and the Village of Dallas is participating in the local share of costs with the County.

Bridge Replacement Projects –

CTH D over Four Mile Creek

Town of Prairie Farm – 9 ½ - 10 ½ Street over Doritty Creek

Town of Clinton – 17th Avenue over Hay River

Town of Sumner – 28th Street over

Barron County took the lead in the State DOT's Low Risk Local Bridge Replacement program. This is a new process that puts more responsibility on the local sponsor (your Highway Department!) but also give the local more control over the delivery and facilitation of the project. The typical state funded local bridge project takes 18-24 months for the design to be completed. We facilitated the design of these 4 local bridges in 4 months, and the projects were all bid already this spring for construction this summer! Additionally, the three Town projects were bid as "Bundled Projects". This means that instead of three separate contracts for construction and construction inspection, they were wrapped up in one contract for construction and one contract for construction inspection. The accelerated delivery of these 4 projects and the bundling of the 3 projects had resulted in one contractor performing all 4 projects, and their bid to construct these bridges is about 15% BELOW the Engineers Estimate.

Highway Department (Continued)

We were also successful in our application for funding two additional projects with DOT administered funding: CTH SS over Chetek River Bridge. This project will replace the bridge superstructure (deck and beams) and rehabilitate the substructure.

CTH A – CTH U to CTH I. This is a pavement replacement project. Safety improvements at the intersection with 18th Street will also be evaluated.

The schedule for these projects is currently in discussion with DOT. We are pushing to get these into the Low Risk category and get these projects constructed in the tightest timelines we can. We should know in the next few weeks if they will be selected for the Phase II Low Risk Program.

The Department also continues its successful partnership with the Towns, Cities and Villages in Barron County and we currently have a substantial list of projects to complete for our local partners. We appreciate their trust in our abilities, quality and cost effectiveness.

As you can see there is quite a bit happening at the Highway Department. Our work list of projects is substantial. One can quickly see the impact the Department has on the transportation system in Barron County. Our crew is outstanding. The skills that they bring to work each and every day are amazing. They take pride in the work that they do and know that they will be driving over their work for many years, so they want it to be done right. As the Highway Commissioner, I thank each of them for their dedication. There is no question that the work that they do is “Essential” to the citizens of Barron County.